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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 TAIPEI 001246

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SUBJECT: WHO DEMARCHE TO TAIWAN: SYMBOLISM VS PRACTICE

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Classified By: AIT Deputy Director David J. Keegan. Reason(s):
1.4 (B/D)

11. (C) Summary. Vice Foreign Minister Michael Kau told AIT Deputy Director that Taiwan intends to continue pushing WHO observership but pledged to give high priority to increasing Taiwan's "meaningful participation" in WHO activities. Kau specifically requested a U.S. statement of support for Taiwan participation in WHO activities, as well as specific U.S. support for Taiwan participation in WHO technical activities, including the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) and the International Health Regulations (IHR) as a "participating party," and for an exchange of letters between Taiwan and WHO on Taiwan participation. He noted that the EU has been generally supportive of Taiwan participation in WHO activities, but only after checking first with Beijing. The Deputy Director also met with TCDC to emphasize U.S. desire to cooperate with Taiwan on WHO matters increasingly at the working level, focusing on enhancing Taiwan participation in WHO technical activities. These two meetings highlighted the political-practical division in Taiwan's WHO diplomacy -- MOFA pushing for international space and domestic political points, TCDC focused on improving Taiwan's ability to work on international health issues. End Summary.

MOFA: Observership, Meaningful Participation

12. (C) On Saturday, April 1, Deputy Director David Keegan met with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Michael Kau (Ying-mao) to present reftel talking points on Taiwan and WHO. Kau was accompanied by MOFA International Organizations (IO) Director-General John Chen and Ministry of Health International Cooperation Director-General Peter Chang. The Deputy Director told VFM Kau that the U.S. supports Taiwan on both WHA observer status and access to meaningful participation in WHO activities. The current WHO situation indicates observer status is very difficult for the foreseeable future, however, and the U.S. believes there can be very little chance for a real breakthrough until Taiwan

and the PRC reach an understanding. Meanwhile, the U.S. believes a "two-by-two" debate at the World Health Assembly (WHA) in May may offer the best way to surface Taiwan aspirations, since the PRC has indicated its willingness to allow a "two-by-two" debate in the WHA.

¶3. (C) The Deputy Director emphasized that the U.S. wants to explore other areas for Taiwan participation in WHO activities, particularly GOARN and IHRs. To this end, Washington has instructed U.S. missions to inform their host governments that the U.S. supports Taiwan's active participation in WHO. In turn, the Deputy Director urged Taiwan to state its willingness to take on responsibilities in the International Health Regulations (IHR) without an expectation of any rights being granted, because the U.S. believes this practical route will demonstrate the positive role Taiwan can play with WHO and bring the greatest practical results.

¶4. (C) Vice Minister Kau expressed appreciation for the opportunity to discuss Taiwan strategy for the WHA, but noted that in previous years Taiwan and the U.S. had held annual consultations in Washington and that he hoped broader consultations might occur this year. Taiwan still hopes, he continued, to attain WHA observer status, which would greatly facilitate Taiwan participation in WHO activities. It would be very difficult for Taiwan to retreat on the observer issue, Kau argued, just as it would be awkward for the U.S. to retreat from its earlier support for Taiwan observership. Rather, he argued, it is important to keep the issue alive and maintain pressure on the PRC. Therefore, Kau continued, Taiwan wants to put observership on the WHA agenda this year, though it will place primary emphasis on "meaningful participation," a strategy which Taiwan would like to discuss with the U.S. In particular, Taiwan wants to interact more

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systematically with GOARN and is, to that end, trying to elicit a written response from GOARN.

MOFA: Request for U.S. Assistance

¶5. (C) Kau told the Deputy Director that Taiwan is requesting a public statement of support from the U.S. for Taiwan's participation in WHO activities. Even just a very general statement, he explained, would greatly assist Taiwan's efforts at meaningful participation in WHO activities. One of Taiwan's biggest problems in trying to enhance its meaningful participation with WHO is that other countries always ask what the U.S. position is. The absence of a recent U.S. statement, Kau argued, had caused other countries to ask whether the U.S. position has changed. IO Director-General John Chen interjected that a possible alternative to a public U.S. statement would be for Health and Human Services Secretary Leavitt to write another letter to Secretary-General Lee Jong-wook expressing U.S. support for Taiwan participation. The WHO Secretariat had responded "within one week" after the last U.S. intervention, Chen noted, and moved quickly to help facilitate Taiwan participation in WHO activities.

¶6. (C) Kau then presented the Deputy Director with a request for "U.S. Support for Taiwan's WHO Campaign" (marked "Confidential," e-mailed separately to EAP/TC), requesting U.S. support in five areas:

(1) Helping Taiwan to establish a partnership with GOARN and other disease prevention and control mechanisms.

(2) Urging WHO to invite Taiwan to participate in all WHO technical meetings, including WHA's Committee A.

(3) Requesting the Director-General of WHO to facilitate Taiwan's participation in regional activities of WHO in Asia.

(4) Urging WHO to accept Taiwan into the IHR mechanism as a "participating party" and to accept Taiwan CDC as an IHR focal point.

(5) Requesting the Director-General of the WHO to exchange letters with Taiwan, so as to establish systematic arrangements for Taiwan's "meaningful participation" in the WHO.

¶7. (C) While Taiwan is already participating in AI technical meetings, Kau explained, there are many barriers inhibiting Taiwan participation. Taiwan, for example, receives little information from WHO and must depend on the WHO website. When WHO does notify Taiwan of a workshop, it is often only a day or two before the application deadline, making it extremely difficult for Taiwan to arrange delegations. Director-General Lee's letter to the Austrian EU Presidency stating that WHO already facilitates Taiwan participation, was very "superficial and perfunctory," failing to note how many meetings had excluded Taiwan. He noted, however, that Taiwan has had constructive meetings with the EU, which has expressed support for Taiwan WHO participation (although, he lamented, only after first checking with Beijing). Kau handed the Deputy Director a chart (e-mailed to EAP/TC) showing that Taiwan has participated in 12 and been "rejected" from participating in 20 WHO technical meetings.

¶8. (C) VFM Kau told the Deputy Director that Taiwan will use "maximum pragmatism" in cooperating with WHO. In the face of PRC interference, Taiwan seeks to negotiate health MOU's with various countries. Recently, for example, Taiwan offered Vietnam 600,000 tabs of Tamiflu. On March 30, Taiwan launched its International Health Action (IHA) database to list medical human resources available in Taiwan (doctors, nurses, etc.) and willing to serve abroad. A medical team, he noted, was in the air just hours after a mud slide occurred in the Philippines earlier this year. IHA, the

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coordinating mechanism for Taiwan's immediate response, is part of Taiwan's commitment to participating in international health activities. If this also helps Taiwan's WHO participation, Kau noted, so much the better.

Putting Practice Before Symbolism

¶9. (C) The Deputy Director responded that MOFA has focused intently on rhetoric in letters and correspondence, which so far, like nomenclature, has not yielded results. The focus, he urged, should be on Taiwan taking on international health responsibilities rather than on receiving letters from the WHO. The problem, the Deputy Director explained, is too much emphasis on symbolism and too little on practicality, reflected in a MOFA-led agenda rather than a Ministry of Health (MOH) or CDC-led agenda. On other issues, AIT just notifies MOFA as a courtesy and then works directly with the functional agency. On WHO issues, we would propose to work more with MOH and CDC and less with MOFA. The U.S. goal is to make the Geneva mechanism work, emphasizing direct interaction between WHO and functional health agencies in Taiwan. This would enable us to spend more time on these kinds of issues and less on the issue of observership.

¶10. (C) VFM Kau concluded by urging broader consultations between Taiwan and the U.S., especially in conjunction with the WHA meetings in May. He asked if the Deputy Director saw a Washington meeting as useful. The Deputy Director responded that he did not see the necessity for this, but that if Taipei has reasons, AIT would be ready to convey them to Washington for consideration. AIT, he explained, would need precise information on what specifically might be accomplished.

Taiwan CDC: Urging Participation in Professional Meetings

¶11. (C) The Deputy Director called on TCDC Director Steve Kuo on April 4 to present reftel talking points. He focused on Taiwan participation in WHO activities, emphasizing that the U.S. believed the most important issue for Taiwan was to continue to expand its participation in WHO professional meetings. The Deputy Director explained that the U.S. was willing to help Taiwan achieve its goals by focusing on health related activities. To that end, he explained, the U.S. is willing to assist Taiwan increase its practical participation in WHO activities and share its expertise in order to create a positive atmosphere for Taiwan.

¶12. (C) Director Kuo expressed appreciation for U.S. support for Taiwan in the WHO, noting that this support had opened many opportunities for Taiwan participation in WHO technical meetings. TCDC officials, he said, had become very frustrated over Taiwan's efforts to participate in WHO as an observer. Minister of Health Hou Sheng-mou, he noted, had directed TCDC to make every effort to participate in all activities of the WHO and not to let any meetings go unattended.

¶13. (C) Kuo initially expressed surprise and discomfort over receiving the demarche, noting that he had invited MOFA to send a representative to the meeting and that MOFA had said there was no need for that as Kau had already received the demarche from AIT. Kuo also pointed out that Taiwan observership in WHO had always been a political issue under MOFA auspices, and he did not want to be seen as usurping MOFA's role or becoming an obstacle to Taiwan's quest for observership at WHO. He wondered, moreover, whether greater Taiwan participation in WHO activities might actually reduce its chances for attaining observer status in the long run. The Deputy Director responded that the opposite was true, that the more active participation by Taiwan in WHO activities, the more goodwill it would generate and, thus, raise Taiwan's long-term chances to attain observer status. The U.S., he said, would continue working with Taiwan to ensure it receives advance notice from WHO about

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international meetings to give ample time to plan attendance.

Comment: Politics vs Practice

¶14. (C) Under heavy political pressure, MOFA continues to push politics and symbolism, subtly trying to leverage WHO responses to Taiwan correspondence to imply some level of "recognition" for Taiwan. When the Deputy Director noted that he would present the reftel talking points to the TCDC on April 4, VDM Kau sought to dissuade him, arguing that presentation to MOFA was sufficient. For his part, although Kuo was initially skeptical about U.S. emphasis on practical over political/symbolism, in the end he seemed satisfied that AIT's recommendation was a positive one which meshed with TCDC's goals of participating in every WHO meeting opportunity possible.

YOUNG